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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 003676

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/07/2015

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NEW ELECTRICITY PROTECTION CHIEF TRYING TO CLEAN UP THE AGENCY

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES DAVID SATTERFIELD FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) AND (d).

11. (C) Summary: MG Sa'ad Hashim, Security Advisor to the Minister of Electricity, has begun working with MNF-I and Embassy counterparts to bring the Electricity Protection Security Service (EPSS) under ministerial control following the removal of the former chief, Faris al-Bayati, August 22. The Ministry of Interior (MoI) is investigating Faris and a number of his supporters, at least three of whom are known insurgents from Latifiyah. Faris has since fled and his whereabouts are unknown. End Summary.

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Faris Out - At Last  
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12. (C) Working closely with Ministry of Interior investigators, Minister of Electricity (ME) Dr. Muhsin Shalash on August 22 removed the head of the EPSS, Faris al-Bayati. After being demoted (vice fired as reported in the press) almost a month earlier, yet refusing to relinquish his position, Faris reportedly left his headquarters office outside the Baghdad South Power Station for home. When ME Shalash arrived with his newly-appointed security advisor MG Sa'ad Hashim to take overall control of the EPSS, approximately 25 Faris loyalists began a demonstration at EPSS HQ. The Minister left the premises unharmed, and MoI forces were brought in to secure the safe departure of MG Hashim. The ensuing scuffles resulted in some minor property damage, but no injuries.

13. (C) ME Shalash told us that he had delayed moving against Faris to allow MoI time to build a legal case. At least three EPSS members were, according to ME sources, on a list of known insurgents from Latifiyah wanted in connection with terrorist attacks. ME sources claim that Faris has now fled with several million dollars in Ministry funds and is wanted by MoI for questioning. Reports that a number of Faris supporters have been arrested remain unconfirmed, but Faris allies in the EPSS remain vocal in their criticism of their chief's removal. MG Hashim said Faris has threatened him, making him fearful for his life and that of his family. ME Shalash speculated that a series of media attacks against him in August (accusing the ME of, among other things, rape, and predicting his imminent removal from office) had, in fact, been part of a smear campaign orchestrated by Faris supporters. Shalash said that he retained the full confidence of PM al-Ja'fari.

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Imposing Order at EPSS  
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14. (C) Coalition Forces have begun meeting MG Hashim to help him firm up the minister's control over the EPSS, jointly developing an action plan to straighten out the books, and to identify and locate EPSS forces. Although there are as many as 10,000 EPSS guards listed in the payroll, MG Hashim suspects the true number of his force is closer to 3,000. He believes that the remaining "employees" only exist on paper to bilk the Ministry, with Faris and his supporters pocketing the cash.

15. (C) MNF-I advisors have offered to help document each EPSS employee with a photo ID card, to include thumbprints and retinal scan recognition capabilities. They will also assist MG Hashim to assess EPSS training levels and to conduct a complete equipment inventory. MNF-I believes the EPSS forces are an ad hoc mix with varying training and skill levels that are not up to their assigned task of securing high value targets such as power plants and substations. MNF-I has developed a training package, currently under consideration, to upgrade EPSS capabilities.  
Satterfield